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THE MONASTERIES (BĀHĀ AND BAHĪ) OF PATAN

A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE CULTURAL TOPOGRAPHY OF A NEWAR TOWN

NIELS GUTSCHOW AND HEMRAJ SHAKYA

This contribution does not aim at providing an understanding of the historical growth process of Patan. The history of Patan is as obscure as that of any other Newar town. It is only now that we have started drawing conclusions from details of urban ritualism¹, implying that certain notions of space could be utilised as evidence which until now was of interest to an anthropologist only.

With processions² as well as the underlying concept of the town plan of Patan - the four stūpas (New. *thūdo*) "guarding" the cardinal points of the compass³ have been dealt with recently. It might therefore suffice to recall that nothing is known about the age of the stūpas - their outer appearance providing no hint whatsoever at dating them earlier than the 16th century. Analysing the map of Patan, however, we come to some conclusions concerning the growth pattern of the town. An early phase of development is characterised by a diagonal road still leading from Nugaḥ in southeast to Tapahiti in northwest. The road follows the contour lines high above the banks of the Bāgmatī (see fig. 1). The same type of spatial organisation characterizes the latest phase of development : a diagonal road leads from Nakabahī to Patan Dhokā, providing a direct link to Kathmandu.

Following the early stage of development for which stands the diagonal road linking several small hamlets, we come across an oriented street-crossing. The elements of this street-crossing point towards Konti (north) with the Kumbheśvara/Sarveśvara and towards Thati (south) with Matsyendranāth as well as Balkumārī in the east and Pūco in the west. It was the impact of this street-crossing which characterized further development and from which a grid-like street pattern emerged. It may be noted that the crossing deviates by 24 degrees exactly from the north. No explanation has been found so far for this deviation.

We assume that it is only during the third stage that the present day street-crossing, oriented towards the four stūpas, came to dominate the basic pattern of the town. Although we are not in a position to locate the early palaces (*darbār*) of Patan, we see a developing centre located in the southeastern sector right at the intersection of the street-crossing towards the end of the 16th century.

We are inclined to believe that the basic change in pattern, i.e. the significant shift from the first to the second street-crossing, one block to the east and south, occurred around the beginning of this millennium.

It is, however, the reign of Siddhi Narasiṃha (1618-1658, Nepal saṃvat 738-778) we would like to concentrate on with the following remarks. Under Siddhi Narasiṃha, Patan reached an early height of cultural development in comparison with Kathmandu and Bhaktapur. The king institutionalized a hierarchic order of the existing monasteries and the new ones built during his rule. A chronicle (*vaṃśāvalī*) tells us of an extension⁴ of Patan and of a translocation of an existing *bāhā* for the purpose of extending the palace.⁵

Moreover, we have an account⁶ mentioning a lot of temples in altogether 37 localities (Nep. *ṭol*) of Patan. All this leads us to assume that the basic pattern of Patan had already fully developed in the middle of the 17th century.

Let us now talk about the pattern of distribution of monasteries (*mahāvihāra*) and branch monasteries (*viḥāra*) which so well determine the cultural, social as well as spatial pattern of Patan.

Today we can count altogether 156 monasteries. Of these, 148 are located in Patan proper and the remaining eight in villages (Cāpagāuṃ No. 41, Bāregāuṃ No. 154, Cobhār No. 39 and No. 156, Pharpiṃ No. 151, Bumga-matī No. 42, and Kirtipur No. 40 and No. 155 - the numbers referring to fig. 2) which belonged to the former domain of the Kingdom of Patan during the reign of the later Malla Kings (16th - 18th centuries). The two monasteries of the western suburb Pūco are counted under Patan proper. It should be noted that it was Siddhi Narasiṃha's plan to extend Patan up to Pūco.⁷

Of the 156 monasteries, 18 are still counted as the main ones (*mahāvihāra* or *bāhā*; mapped in fig. 2 with full names) whereas 32 are secondary monasteries (*mahāvihāra* or *bahī*; mapped in fig. 2 with circles around numbers). The remaining ones are branch monasteries (*viḥāra* or *kacabāhā*)

The main difference between the monasteries is centred on the right of initiation. The 18 main *bāhās* have the right to initiate *Vajrācārya* - the highest caste group among the Buddhist population, usually referred to as priests - as well as *Śākya*. The 32 *bahīs*, however, have the sole right to initiate *Śākya*. The branch monasteries do not have any right of initiation.

The striking information the chronicle provides is the order of hierarchy and precedence, which was kept nearly unchanged until now.⁸ Only 12 of the 18 *bāhās* of today existed when Siddhi Narasiṃha set the rules for the election of the heads (*nāyke*) of the *bāhā* and the order of precedence. Among these, *Yacchubāhā* (No. 130), *Subāhā* (No. 138), *Cukabāhā* (No. 36), *Ukubāhā* (No. 2) and *Gujibāhā* (No. 17) had a head who presided over the chiefs of these five *bāhās*. It should be noted that all these *bāhās* are located in the southeast of the town.

The newly established *bāhās* were named as *Oṃbāhā* (No. 124), *Jyobāhā* (No. 127) and *Dhumbāhā* (No. 110), all located in the northeastern sector of the town. Of those *bāhās* in the villages *Cobāhā* (No. 39) in *Co-bhār* and *Kyapūbāhā* (No. 40) in *Kirtipur* were counted among the 18 main *bāhās*. The chronicle thus counts 17 *bāhās* as the leading ones. *Sibāhā* (No. 74) was established only after the rules were set by Siddhi Narasiṃha. It was thus left to the succeeding kings to provide the right of initiation to *Sibāhā*.

Yet the order of the 15 *bāhās* is still observed in the performance of certain rituals. Picture 5 shows 150 "ajus" (eldermen) being offered the "five offerings" (*pañcadān*) by a certain Siddhirāj *Śākya* of *Nagbāhā* in the courtyard of *Akibāhā* on the occasion of a family event. Each of the 15 *bāhās* sends 10 ajus to take part in that ritual. Thus we see that although the right of initiation was given to two *bāhās* outside the town as well as to the one that was later established, certain activities were confined to those 15 *bāhās* which existed during the reign of Siddhi Narasiṃha.

Among the most spectacular spatial manipulations we have to consider the translocation of the *Haṣṭbāhā* from the present side of the palace towards the quarter of *Gābāhā*. Even now a special ritual reminds us of that manipulation thus providing an idea of how precarious the transformation of a given ritual infrastructure must have been. Legend has it that the *Haṣṭbāhā* was founded at the site of a rivulet. When fire was seen above that rivulet it was taken as an auspicious sign to build a monastery. Fire and water are symbols of worlds above and below earth, thus defining a sacred place of communication between this world and

that of the gods.⁹

Even now, during the month of Gunla - the holy month of the Buddhists, corresponding to August of the Gregorian calendar - a massive square-shaped copper vessel, embellished with a Buddha image, is placed right in front of the main entrance of mulcok, the most important place within the palace. This vessel seems to aim at reconciling history. Space had been transformed - yet preceding conditions seem to convey certain qualities of space. In a way we have to believe that a given spatial order is ritually unchangeable. Therefore, if any change, i.e. any manipulation changing a religious environment, takes place, a ritual is needed for reconciliation with the gods or powers concerned.

Of the former 148 monasteries only a few are now in good state and very few still function as a monastery, the most active of them being Kvābāhā (No. 104). Some bāhās are hardly traceable like Kontibāhā (No. 106) and Kanibāhā (No. 149). Some bāhās have preserved only the Buddha shrine (Kinubāhā, No. 43; Jyāṭhābāhā, No. 14) whereas others - like Ubāhāgathica (No. 2), Ukubāhāla (No. 1), Būbāhā (No. 60), Gābāhā (No. 59) or Kvābāhā (No. 104) - still play an active role in the ritual life of Patan. Some bāhās have been converted into predominantly Hindu shrines, leaving no trace of the former monastery, e.g. Śikabāhī (No. 153), the place of which is now occupied by the piṭha of Cāmuṇḍā, one of the eight mother goddesses (*Aṣṭamātṛkā*) of Patan.

NOTES

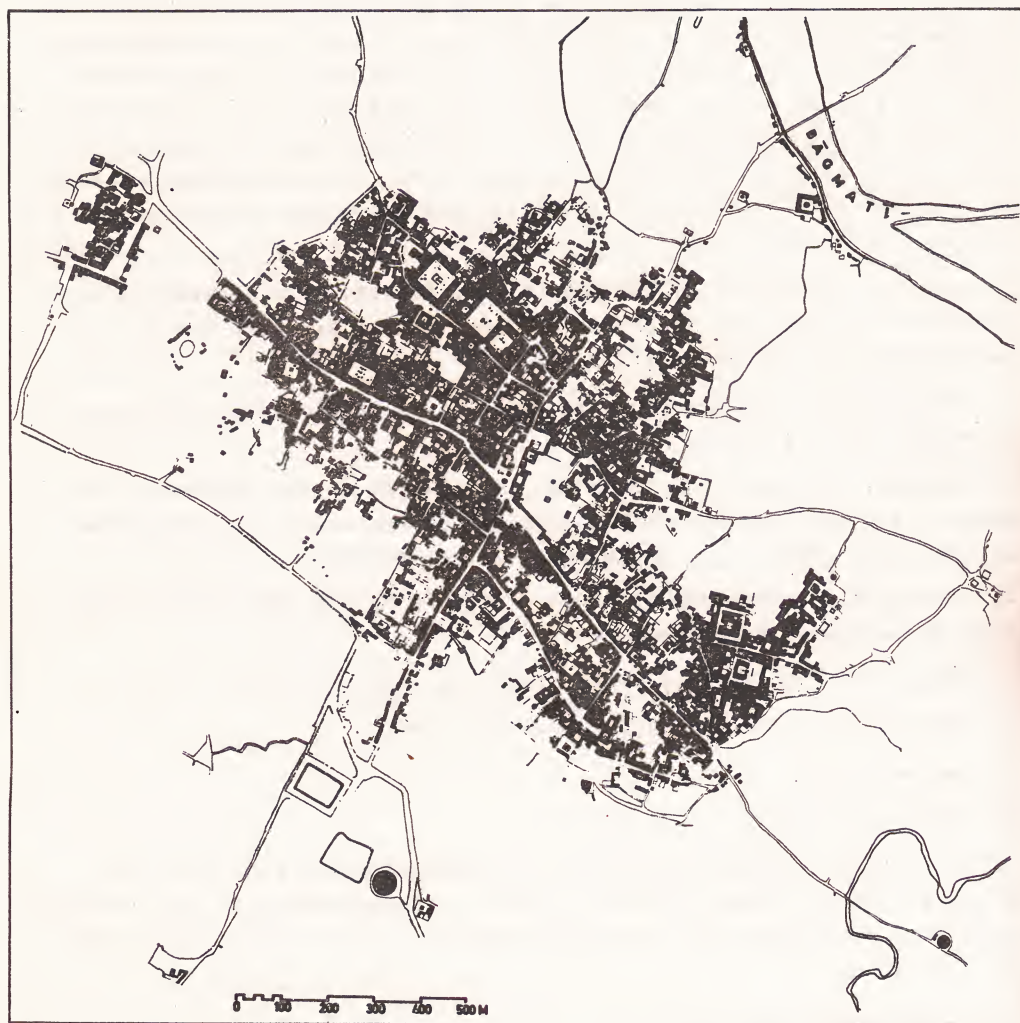
This paper is part of an extensive survey of the Newar towns of the Kathmandu valley, which was made possible by a grant of the GERMAN RESEARCH COUNCIL. The former monasteries of Patan were traced in March 1974. This paper aims at nothing more than providing dates. A historical view of the topography of Patan is still missing. The transcription of the list was made with the help of Mr. Thakurlal Manandhar and Dr. Michael Witzel. Thanks to their encouragement the manuscript was finished in december 1977.

- 1) see as a case study : GUTSCHOW, N. and KÖLVER, B. : *Ordered space - Concepts and Functions in a town of Nepal*. Nepal Research Centre Publications, No. 1, Wiesbaden 1975.
- 2) GUTSCHOW, N. : *Prozessionen in Pāṭan*; in : *Storia della Citta*, No. 4, Milano 1977, p. 31-44.
- 3) WIESNER, Ullrich : *Zur Frage der sogenannten Aśoka-Stūpas in Patan, Nepal*; in : *Zur Kunstgeschichte Asiens - 50 Jahre Lehre und Forschung an der Universität Köln*, Wiesbaden 1977, p. 189-198.
- 4) HASRAT, B.J. : *History of Nepal - As Told by its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers*. Hashiarpur 1970.
- 5) WRIGHT, D. : *History of Nepal*. Cambridge 1977, p. 234.
- 6) KUNU SHARMA : *Kīrtīpataka. Pāṭan 2018 (1961)*.
- 7) see note 4
- 8) WRIGHT, op. cit., p. 234-235.
- 9) For cosmic religion see IRWIN's enlightened article on the Aśoka pillars : IRWIN, John : *Aśokan Pillars : a Reassessment of the Evidence, Part IV : Symbolism*; in : *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXVIII, Nov. 1976, p. 734-753.

LOCATION NAMES

| | | | | | |
|-------------|---|--------------------|----------------|---|----------|
| <i>cheṃ</i> | - | house | <i>hiṭi</i> | - | fountain |
| <i>nani</i> | - | courtyard | <i>gallī</i> | - | lane |
| <i>cuka</i> | - | courtyard | <i>taḥdham</i> | - | big |
| <i>libī</i> | - | courtyard | <i>cīdham</i> | - | small |
| <i>dune</i> | - | inside (the house) | <i>tvā</i> | - | quarter |
| <i>dusa</i> | | | | | |

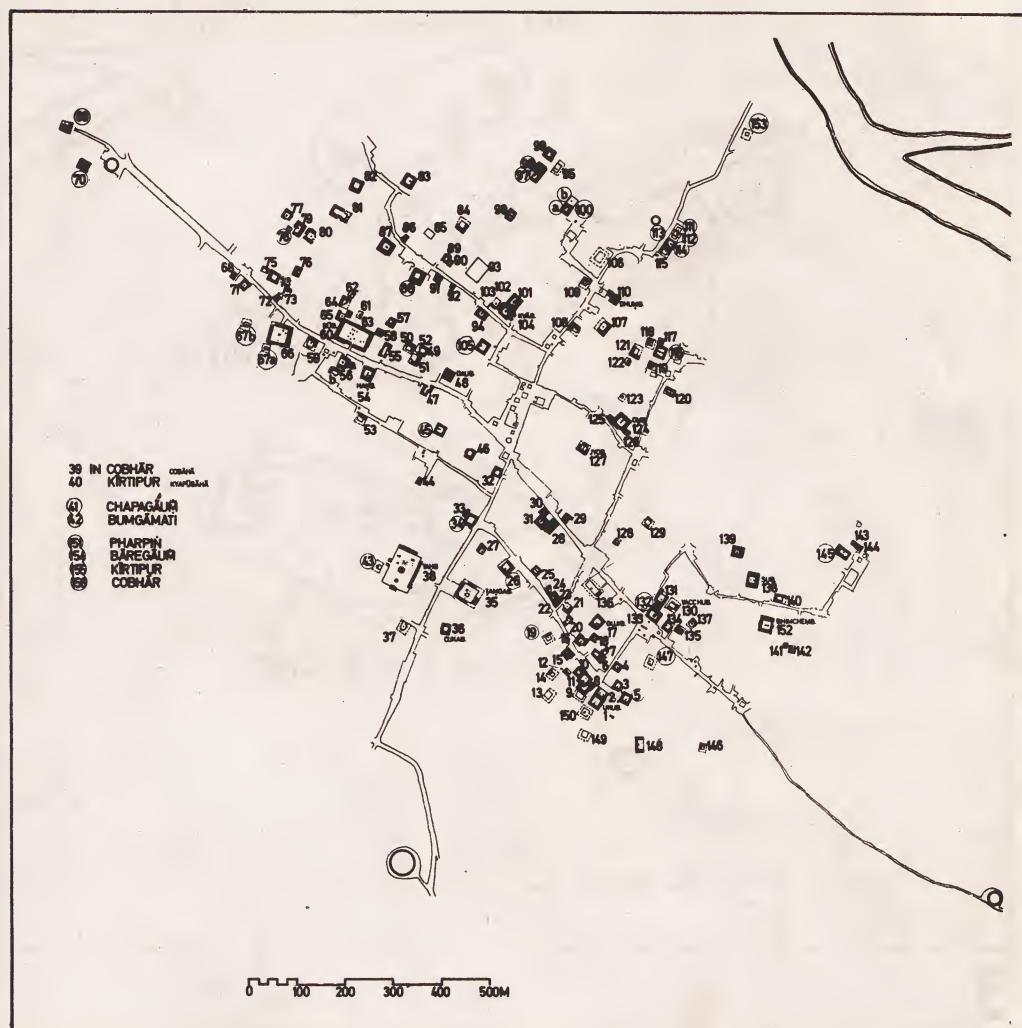
FIGURES AND PLATES



1

PĀṬAN

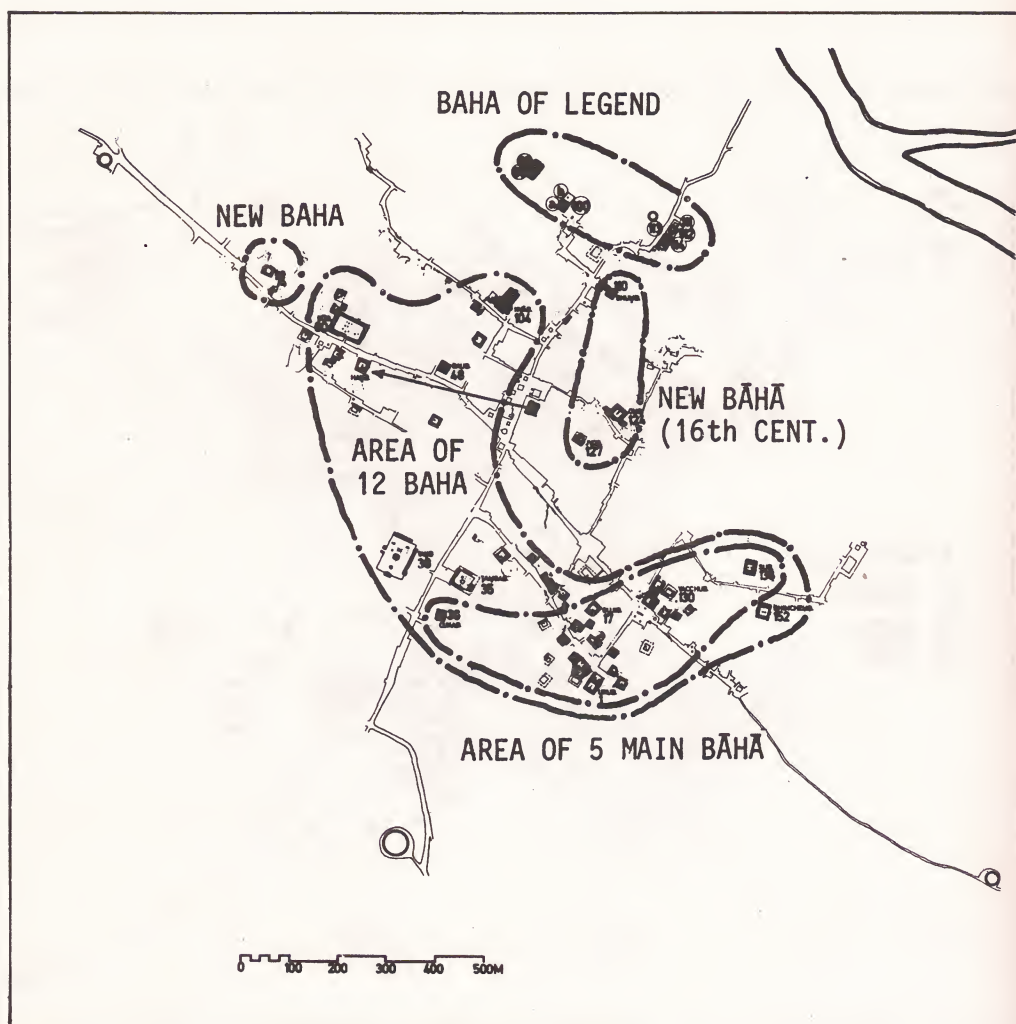
Built up area in 1970. A street cross (18 degrees difference from the right angle), defined by 4 stūpas underlies the town-plan. The square (Thyākābāhā 4 by 4 m) or rectangular (Būbāhā 60 by 34 m) courtyards of the monasteries fit very well into the grid-like pattern of the streets.



2

PĀṬAN

Of the 156 listed monasteries of the former domain of Pāṭan 146 are situated in Pāṭan proper, 2 in the western suburb of Pūco (nep. Pulcok) and 8 in villages west and south of the town.



3

PĀṬAN

Not much is known about the historical topography of Pāṭan. During the reign of Siddhi Narasiṅha however 12 existing and 4 newly founded monasteries (mahāvihāra) were cited. A transfer was done (Haṅbāhā) to enable the king to enlarge his palace.

4. Patan : Air view of Ikhālakḥū, the main square of one of the 24 quarters (Nep. *ṭol*, New. *tvā*) of Patan at the intersection of two streets parallel to the street-crossing which underlies the town-plan. . Around the square with its Bhairava, Gaṇeś and Jagannāth temple as well





LIST OF THE MONASTERIES

List of the 156 *bāhās* of Patan and the domain of Patan. The 18 main *bāhās* are italicized in full length, whereas the 32 *bahīs* are only partially italicized (*mahāvihāra*). The other 106 *bāhās* are so-called *kaca-bāhās* or branch monasteries (*viḥāra*).

Two of the 18 main *bāhās* and six of the 32 *bahīs* are located outside Patan proper within neighbouring villages.

| SANSKRIT-NAME | NEWARI-NAME |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. <i>Omkuḷiśrī Rudravarnamahāvihāra</i> | <i>Ukubāhāla</i> |
| 2. <i>Khaṇḍacukavihāra</i> | Ubāhagathica |
| 3. <i>Pūrṇacandravihāra</i> | Dunebāhā |
| 4. <i>Jayativarnavihāra</i> | Jatibāhā |
| 5. <i>Omkuḷimahāvihāra</i> | <i>Ubāhābahī</i> |
| 6. <i>Bodhimaṇḍapavihāra</i> | Mahābaudha |
| 7. <i>Dhanavajravihāra</i> | Ghaṇāṇḍabāhā |
| 8. <i>Hiraṇyālābhavihāra</i> | Bhājūḍhanabāhā |
| 9. <i>Ratnalābhavihāra</i> | Bhimarājābāhā |
| 10. <i>Rūpavarṇavihāra</i> | Nagubāhā |
| 11. <i>Ikṣavihāra</i> | Icheṃbāhā |
| 12. <i>Dhanavīrasimhavihāra</i> | Dhanabāhā |
| 13. <i>Vasuvārṇavihāra</i> | Basubāhā |
| 14. <i>Padmavarṇavihāra</i> | Jyāṭhabāhā |
| 15. <i>Dinavarṇavihāra</i> | Hiṭṭiphusabāhā |
| 16. <i>Amṛtavarṇavihāra</i> | Takabāhā |
| 17. <i>Vaiṣṇavarṇamahāvihāra</i> | <i>Gujibāhā</i> |
| 18. <i>Bhāṣkaravarṇavihāra</i> | Siddhibāhā |
| 19. <i>Sthavīrapātramahāvihāra</i> | <i>Thapābahī</i> |
| 20. <i>Samantabhadravihāra</i> | Pālubāhā |
| 21. <i>Siṃhacūkavihāra</i> | Sikucābāhā |
| 22. <i>Kūṭasiṃhavihāra</i> | Kutubāhā |
| 23. <i>Jayaśrīviḥāra</i> | Jothābāhā |
| 24. <i>Kulacaityakīrtivihāra</i> | Kuladevbāhā |
| 25. <i>Devadattavihāra</i> | Naudhabāhā |
| 26. <i>Jyeṣṭhavarṇamahāvihāra</i> | <i>Jyābāhābahī</i> |
| 27. <i>Cakrakīrtivihāra</i> | Khvākhanabāhā |
| 28. <i>Dharmakīrtivihāra</i> | Harṣabāhā |
| 29. <i>Bhājumanakīrtivihāra</i> | Gvaṅgaḥbāhā |
| 30. <i>Triratnasimhavihāra</i> | Triratnasimbāhā |
| 31. <i>Dhanavīrakuṭāgaravihāra</i> | Dhanadeobāhā |
| 32. <i>Hatigalavihāra</i> | Haugabāhā |

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 33. Bhājūḍhanasīmḥavihāra | Ibābahīdune |
| 34. Rājāsīmāhavihāra | Ibābahī |
| 35. Jyēṣṭhavarṇamahāvihāra | Taṃgaḥbāhā |
| 36. Cakravārṇamahāvihāra | Cūkabāhā |
| 37. Thatināmavihāra | Thatibāhā |
| 38. Dharmakīrtimahāvihāra | Taḥbāhā |
| 39. Kacchapaḷagirimahāvihāra | Cobāhā (in Cobhār near Kirtipur) |
| 40. Jagatpālamahāvihāra | Kyupūbāhā (in Kirtipur) |
| 41. Perakhāmāhavihāra | Wabahī (in Capagaum) |
| 42. Amarāvatimahāvihāra | Buṃgabahī (in Buṃgamatī) |
| 43. Lokakīrtimahāvihāra | Kinūbahī |
| 44. Ikanāmavihāra | Ikabāhā |
| 45. Surāścandramahāvihāra | Nhāykaṃbahī |
| 46. Jaganmaṅgaḥvihāra | Jombāhā |
| 47. Dharmakīrtivihāra | Bhelkūbāhā |
| 48. Dattanāmamahāvihāra | Daubāhā |
| 49. Yokulīvihāra | Yokubāhā |
| 50. Vṛṣarājavihāra | Briṣarājabāhā |
| 51. Jagajjyotīrvihāra | Jogadhūsabāhā |
| 52. Yokulivihāra | Kakubāhā |
| 53. Jyēnavihāra | Jyānabāhā |
| 54. Ratnākaramahāvihāra | Haḥbāhā |
| 55. Udayadevavihāra | Wanabāhā |
| 56. Yantāvihāra | Walābāhā |
| 57. Navavihāra | Nhūbāhā |
| 58. Bhairavasīmḥavihāra | Bhailasīmḥabāhā |
| 59. Gaḍavihāra | Gābāhā |
| 60. Yaśodharamahāvihāra | Būbāhā |
| 61. Sukhāvatīvihāra | Bhājupatibāhā |
| 62. Devajotivihāra | Naṃdayabūbāhā |
| 63. Devarājavihāra | Devarājabūbāhā |
| 64. Ikunāmavihāra | Ikubāhā |
| 65. Padmāvatīvihāra | Naḥbāhā |
| 66. Padmāvatīyekulivihāra | Naḥbāhākulāṃ |
| 67. (a) Kāmukanāmamahāvihāra | Khvayabahī |
| 67. (b) Kāmukanāmamahāvihāra | Khvayabahī |
| 68. Kanakadattavihāra | Natvābāhā |
| 69. Rakṣeśvarimahāvihāra | Pūcobahī |
| 70. Śilāpuradānāgirimahāvihāra | Cvepūcobahī |
| 71. Koṭṭavihāra | Kvaṭhabāhā |
| 72. Cāṃgalavihāra | Cāṃgalabāhā |
| 73. Dharmakīrtivihāra | Dharmakīrtibāhā |
| 74. Śrīvatsamahāvihāra | Sibāhā |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 75. Śrīvatsadundubhivihāra | Sijabāhā |
| 76. Kanakavarṇavihāra | Kanakabāhā |
| 77. Chvācavihāra | Chayabāhā |
| 78. Chvācavihāra | Cidhamguchāyabāhī |
| 79. Cakramuktavihāra | Ganeśabāhā |
| 80. Mūlāśrīvihāra | Mūbāhā |
| 81. Cukhāvihāra | Dudubāhā |
| 82. Suprekṣaṇavihāra | Mikhābāhā |
| 83. Hemapurīvihāra | Yetābāhā |
| 84. Ataskīrtivihāra | Akibāhā |
| 85. Bhāṣkaravarṇavihāra | Nyākḥacuka |
| 86. Bhājubalavihāra | Unacubhājubalabāhā |
| 87. Śrīvatsavihāra | Athabāhā |
| 88. Lokakīrtimahāvihāra | Nakabāhī |
| 89. Mativihāra | Matibāhā |
| 90. Govindasimhavihāra | Matibāhācukacā |
| 91. Jyotivarṇavihāra | Khāchembāhā |
| 92. Ratnajyotivihāra | Thyākābāhā |
| 93. Paśuvarṇavihāra | Ilanhedilko |
| 94. Navavihāra | Nhubāhā |
| 95. Yokhāchembivihāra | Yokhāchembāhā |
| 96. Suvarṇavihāra | Ikhāchembāhā |
| 97. Nāpicandramahāvihāra | Duntubāhī |
| 98. Gopicandramahāvihāra | Pintabāhī |
| 99. Ānandavihāra | Ānandabāhā |
| 100. (a) Lalitavanamahāvihāra | Cīdham Kontibāhī |
| 100. (b) Lalitavanamahāvihāra | Taḥdham Kontibāhī |
| 101. Vagīśvaravihāra | Sasunanī |
| 102. Micchuvihāra | Ilāṃnanī |
| 103. Dvārikāvihāra | Ilāṃnanī |
| 104. Hiraṇyavarṇamahāvihāra | Kvābāhā |
| 105. Maṇimaṇḍapamahāvihāra | Dhaugābāhī |
| 106. Saṃkhādharakṛtavihāra | Kontibāhā |
| 107. Kulimavihāra | Kulimabāhā |
| 108. Svamṭhavihāra | Svamṭhabāhā |
| 109. Itumvihāra | Kobāhā |
| 110. Guṇalakṣmīkīrtimahāvihāra | Dhumbāhā |
| 111. Yampimahāvihāra | Ībāhī |
| 112. Yampiyantāmāhāvihāra | Ībāhī |
| 113. Yampiyantāmāhāvihāra | Ībāhī |
| 114. Yampiyantāmāhāvihāra | Ībāhī |
| 115. Karuṇācūkavihāra | Karuṇācuka |
| 116. Saptapuramahāvihāra | Cikambāhī |

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 117. Maṇikūṭavihāra | Burmavaidyabāhā |
| 118. Triratnavīravīhāra | Triratnabāhā |
| 119. Bhaiṣajyarājavihāra | Bhaiṣajyabāhā |
| 120. Hodolanānavihāra | Honabāhā |
| 121. Kularatnavihāra | Kularatnabāhā |
| 122. Yantāvihāra | Yantabāhā |
| 123. Lakṣadhanavihāra | Lakhyadhāṃcuka |
| 124. Vajrakīrtimahāvīhāra | Oṃbāhā |
| 125. Sūryavatravihāra | Jagatamunibāhā |
| 126. Dharmakīrtivihāra | Lakhedhāmbāhā |
| 127. Jetavarṇamahāvīhāra | Jyobāhā |
| 128. Suvarṇakhyavihāra | Suṃbāhā |
| 129. Yaṃgraugranānavihāra | Yanmubāhā |
| 130. Balādharaḡuptamahāvīhāra | Yacchubāhā |
| 131. Amṛtavarṇavihāra | Nhubāhā |
| 132. Amṛtavarṇamahāvīhāra | Dathubahī |
| 133. Mitravārṇavihāra | Tvāyabāhā |
| 134. Hendupativihāra | Bhimdyobāhā |
| 135. Layanacaityabimbavihāra | Henubāhā |
| 136. Ratnajayavihāra | Sagabāhā |
| 137. Jayamaṅgalavihāra | Tanabāhā |
| 138. Jayamanoharamahāvīhāra | Subāhā |
| 139. Thakūṃvihāra | Thakūmbāhā |
| 140. Jnānacandravihāra | Pinchembāhā |
| 141. Pilāchemvihāra | Pilāchembāhā |
| 142. Bhīmacandravihāra | Pilāchembāhā |
| 143. Padmotaśrīmahāvīhāra | Guṭṭabahi (Dathubahi) |
| 144. Basucaśīlamahāvīhāra | Guṭṭabahi (Taḡdhāmbahi) |
| 145. Gustalamahāvīhāra | Guṭṭabahi (Cīdhāmbahi) |
| 146. Paṇḍavavihāra | Lukhusibāhā |
| 147. Itirājamahāvīhāra | Ilāyabahi |
| 148. Yogālāmkhyavihāra | Yaṃgabāhā |
| 149. Kanakavarṇavihāra | Kanibāhā |
| 150. Yantāribīvihāra | Yetalibi |
| 151. Gaganakṣaramahāvīhāra | Phaṃpībāhā (in Pharpiṃ) |
| 152. Mayūravārṇamahāvīhāra | Bhinchembāhā |
| 153. | Sikabahi |
| 154. | Bāregāumbahi (in Bāregāum) |
| 155. | Kyupūbahi (in Kirtipur) |
| 156. | Cobābahi (in Cobhār) |